

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 44

NEWSWEEK
26 APRIL 1982

Playing the Spy Game

By DAVID C. MARTIN, Pentagon Correspondent

Truth was the first casualty in the battle for the Falklands. We are now seeing an elaborate exercise in misinformation. Soviet and American submarines have been reported where they're not, while superpower spy aircraft have supposedly been spotted performing missions they in fact cannot fly. There are obvious motives for the false reports. The British, who want the United States to lean more forthrightly their way, hope to intimidate the Argentines with exaggerated stories about Britain's capabilities. The Argentines want the United States to believe they are being driven into the arms of the Soviet Union. So it is not surprising that Americans on the sidelines are asking just who is doing what and with which to whom.

Contrary to some reports, there were no American reconnaissance flights over the Falklands or the Argentine mainland before, during or after the invasion. Neither the SR-71 nor the U-2, the principal U.S. spy planes, can fly unrefueled from a U.S. base to the Falklands and back. The planes can be refueled, but such a mission would require that the United States secure landing rights for tanker aircraft somewhere in the Southern Hemisphere. Latin American countries would deny landing rights to avoid any tilt toward Britain.

Secrets: The United States and Britain have cooperated in some unusual ways. Once, Washington got a message from the British Government that an Argentine ship had entered the 200-mile quarantine zone around the Falklands and was in danger of being sunk by a British submarine.

The Administration quickly relayed a warning to the Argentines. "Such limited help and information as Argentina has received from us has been designed to keep their vessels out of harm's way," says one top Administration hand. "Nobody wants anything sunk. We don't want anything to precipitate a shooting match." As things turned out, the sighting proved to be an error. Beyond the one incident, intelligence sharing is business as usual. The United States has KH-11 satellites in north-south orbit, but they are not being used to snoop on the Falklands. Other ELINT "ferret" satellites do pick up low-level radar emissions from Argentine military installations, but the best intelligence—classified Top Secret/Umbra—on the Falklands comes from Britain's own communications intercepts.

The other assistance that the

United States is providing Britain is less exotic, but no less routine. The Royal Navy is using an American satellite for its communications link with its submarines in the South Atlantic. British subs, in fact, frequently use U.S. communication facilities, including satellites, when they go out on NATO patrols. There have also been reports that the United States has topped off the fuel tanks on Ascension Island with 2 million gallons of jet fuel. The 1962 agreement under which the United States operates the airstrip specifically provides for the refueling of any "transient" British aircraft, and U.S. officials say the topping off was ordered in February, well before the Falkland crisis began.

Trailed: U.S. intelligence reports indicate that the Soviets have offered to transmit information on the British fleet to the Argentines. Buenos Aires has accepted the offer, worsening fears of an Argentine tilt toward Moscow. Soviet mine sweepers trailed the British fleet out of Gibraltar and off the coast of Morocco. One BEAR reconnaissance aircraft out of Angola has been spotted within visual range of the armada. And the Soviets have sent two more BEARS to Cuba, though the Pentagon believes the action was part of a routine rotation of the two BEARS normally stationed in Cuba. The Soviets have always monitored NATO exercises, and they would be foolish not to keep tabs on the largest British naval deployment since World War II. The Russians also launched a "quick look" reconnaissance satellite on the day of the invasion. Its orbit carries it over the Falklands. U.S. intelligence reports that each time the Soviet satellite has been in position to take pictures of the Falklands, the target has been obscured by darkness or bad weather. The satellite has a flight life of about two weeks, so the Soviets will

have to launch another soon.

Two Soviet subs now in the South Atlantic could assist the Argentines in finding the British subs, but the practical difficulties of passing the information to the Argentines are overwhelming. The Soviets have no experience in operating with the Argentine Navy, and by the time they located a British sub, transmitted the data to Buenos Aires and awaited an Argentine response, the sub would be long gone.

It remains difficult for U.S. intelligence to determine what the Soviets are really telling Argentina. That could change if Argentina makes some tactical move revealing special knowledge unavailable to its own intelligence-gathering operations. But for now, U.S. sources predict that the Soviets will continue to talk a better game than they are really playing in sending secrets to Argentina.

The HMS *Superb*: Nobody wants anything sunk!

